MONTEREY NEWS

April 2009
VOLUME XXXIX · Number 4

The Town

Lake Matters

The Select Board sent a strong letter to the Conservation Commission with a complaint about Steven Levkoff's clear-cutting of trees on a slope of Lake Garfield off Eaton Road (see article p. 4). Steven Levkoff is from Brookville, New York. His architect is Pamela Sandler of Stockbridge, and his construction contractor is Carl Audia of Becket. The Conservation Commission issued an enforcement order against the Eaton Road property, thus halting work on a $3.5 million, 8700-square-foot house that will overlook the lake. The clear cutting was observed on February 28 by a neighbor who heard chainsaws.

The Parks Commission requested that the Harbormaster and/or Deputy Harbormaster stress that swimming beyond the ropes is not allowed on the Lake Garfield town beach. Putting up a sign stating this was suggested. Verizon refuses to replace the phone at the town beach; the Parks Committee will check on other phone options.

Rod Palmer of the Lake Garfield Boat Ramp Committee came to the Select Board meeting, and various ideas were discussed. A meeting of the Select Board and Boat Ramp Committee was suggested. The Select Board will continue to investigate available grant money for this project.

The water quality study grant for Lake Buel, sponsored by Berkshire Regional Planning, was turned down.

The Select Board sent a letter to Jack Shepard of Massachusetts Fish and Game requesting that a porta-potty be placed at the Lake Buel boat ramp for the 2009 boating season.

The Lake Garfield dam spillway was closed completely on February 17.

Financial Matters

Town Accountant Barbara Gauthier asked about a special article to take

Enjoying the spring sun along Curtis Road (photo Maynard Forbes).

$14,700 from free cash to pay for the salt shed design.

Linda Thorpe, Town Clerk nominee, discussed with the Select Board the budget for her position. After meeting with Linda, the Board reviewed the policy of neighboring towns in order to get some idea of their salary compensations for the same position.

Janet Cathcart of the Employee Compensation Committee reviewed the compensation of town employees. After some discussion, both with Janet and after she left, the board approved a motion to accept the compensation packages as proposed by the committee, including health care, and to review the situation on an ongoing basis.

The Select Board had a lengthy meeting with the Finance Committee to hammer out the budget that will appear on the May annual Town Meeting warrant. Because of the economy and the rising price of salt and sand, various adjustments have to be made so the town will not have to pass a budget override in the near future.

An informational town meeting will be on Friday, April 24, at 7 p.m. at the firehouse, to review and discuss the final budget before it is voted on in Town Meeting on Saturday, May 2. This is the ideal time for the public to ask questions about the proposed town budget and other warrant articles. Residents and second homeowners are strongly encouraged to attend so they can understand the proposed budget and the financial challenges that face the town in the coming year!

The annual Town Meeting will be held on Saturday, May 2, at 9:30 a.m. at the firehouse. There will be a special Town Meeting at 9:00.

Stanley Ross of the Board of Assessors talked with the Select Board about the Monterey General Store's fundraising efforts (approx. $47,000 by mid-March through sale of scrip and loans). The Assessors feel it might be a good thing to reduce the Monterey General Store's real estate taxes for a certain amount of time (to be determined) to help the store stay in town to continue to meet the town's needs and thrive. Ross believes the proposal would need to go to a town meeting vote and the Assessors are still looking into the details, but they wanted to see if the Select Board had any objections. The Board questioned how you would justify it to other businesses that may question why they aren't getting the same break.

Highway Matters

Bids were opened for the sale of the 1993 Mack truck and related equipment. A bid of $17,257 was presented by the LB Corporation (the minimum bid was $12,000). A deposit was not included, but the Select Board accepted the bid as long as full payment is presented in the form of a cashier's check at the time of pickup.

The Select Board went over the Highway Department budget requests with Director of Operations Maynard Forbes. As stated above, because of the increased cost of sand and salt, adjustments were made to the Highway Department's suggested budget that may impact the town's winter clear-road policy.

Police Matters

Police Chief Gareth Backhaus said that the emergency shelter plan that has been discussed by a group of town residents is being worked on through the Southern Berkshire Emergency Planning Committee. A likely place for an emergency shelter would be at one of the regional schools. The firehouse, suggested as a possibility by some, is not a good venue because it would be the operations center in an emergency.

The Police Department responded to the following issues:

- Lockout at Blue Heron.
- Abandoned motor vehicle, Beartown Mountain Road.
- Physical assistance on Main Road.
- False alarms: Mt. Hunger Road., Beartown Mountain Road (2), and Woodland Drive.
- Served summons on Hupi Road.
- Motor vehicle accident, mutual aid, Great Barrington.
- Medical assistance, Pixley Road and New Marlborough Road.

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- Operating under the influence.
- Chimney fire, Main Road, assisted Fire Department.
- Disabled vehicle, Fairview Road.
- Abandoned 911 call, Main Road.
- Loose cows, Blue Hill Road.
- Motor vehicle accident, Main Road.
- Art School Road resident calls nightly to lodge complaint against National Grid and Verizon about humming noises.

Animal Control Issues

The Board of Health and the Select Board agreed that the Animal Control Officer, the Select Board, the Board of Health, and the Police Department all need to meet to discuss the job description, responsibilities, duty, and budget of the Animal Control Officer.

Charles Ferris asked the Select Board to consider a town dog park, perhaps at the Edith Wilson property or behind the Greene Park ballfield. Berkshire Fence estimates that a chain-link fence would cost around $16–$18 a linear foot. Linda Thorpe provided Mr. Ferris with some contacts in Great Barrington who have been working on a dog park there; she also suggested contacting Bridget Krans on the Parks Committee, whose father is involved in the Great Barrington effort. Dan Moriarty spoke in favor of this project.

The Select Board asked Mr. Ferris to work out the project before annual Town Meeting, so that funding may be addressed, either through the Park Commission budget or as a special article.

Special Town Meeting April 2

There will be a Special Town Meeting on April 2, 2009, at 7 pm at the Monterey Firehouse. Some of the items that will be addressed are:

In Article 5 of the warrant, a new definition of "Camp or Recreational Facility, Seasonal or Year Round" will be added to address Kutsher's Sports Camp's difficulties in obtaining permits to hold year-round activities.

There will be a review of the uses, regulations, approval, and design and construction of common driveways.

Town Positions

Brian Puntin resigned from his positions on the Agricultural Committee, the Planning Board, and the Lake Garfield Boat Ramp Committee because he is relocating to Lenox.

Linda Hebert was appointed to the Council on Aging for a three-year term.

On the recommendation of Building Commissioner Donald Torrico, Donald S. Hopkins was appointed as the alternate Plumbing and Gas Inspector, and James Kern as the alternate Wiring Inspector.

Footstone by Joanna Jennings was one of the Grand Prize winners in the Monterey Cultural Council's 2007 Photo Contest. The contest is returning this summer.

Transfer Station

The Select Board voted to increase the annual transfer station sticker fee for two stickers with license plate numbers from $35 to $40. The temporary sticker price, for renters and owners, with no license plate number, was increased from $10 to $20, and the time it is valid was decreased from one fiscal year to one month.

Suggestions were made that the Transfer Station contract be put out to bid, because of comparison with what other towns are paying for similar services. Mary Ellen Brown suggested that Eco-Waste be asked to bid on the transfer station service.

— Sue Protheroe

Conservation Commission News

Order of Conditions Violated on Lake Garfield

At its regular meeting on March 9, the Monterey Conservation Commission first heard informally from developer Shaun Tucker, who wishes to build sixteen houses on his land off Route 57, across from the former Lee Side Lodge. Mr. Tucker and Mike Parsons of Kelly, Granger, and Parsons in Great Barrington outlined their intentions to the Commission, which include 25 percent or four units of affordable housing. One small area of the overall plan is wetlands, but it is not to be used for a building lot, rather as common land for the sixteen houses. The affordable houses would be sold for $160,000 each and would contain three bedrooms and two bathrooms. All the houses would be stick-built, as opposed to modular construction and would, Mr. Tucker said, provide work for local builders.

The next order of business before the Commission was of urgent interest for many people. Sixteen concerned citizens attended this part of the meeting, several of them abutters to a project at 26 Eaton Road on property belonging to Mr. Steven Levkoff of Brookville, New York, who was present, with six of his agents.

The Conservation Commission has worked with Mr. Levkoff and his agents because parts of the property are protected by both the Wetlands Protection Act and the Scenic Mountains Act. Mr. Levkoff's agents had filed a Notice of Intent with the Conservation Commission concerning clearing to be done on a steep slope leading down to Lake Garfield, as well as plans for waterfront alterations. Two Orders of Conditions, one for each Act, were drawn up and sent to the applicant, Mr. Levkoff.

Conservation Commissioner Chris Blair explained that the first one hundred feet, by the lakeshore, constitute a wetlands buffer zone where no cutting was to be allowed. The next one hundred feet, known as "Area 2," are protected by the Scenic Mountains Act. Here the Order of Conditions allowed limited, specific thinning, with no beech, birch, or conifers to be cut, nor any trees five inches or more in diameter. This steep slope had been clear-cut by its previous owner in 1985. It was, then as now, a blatant violation of the Wetlands Protection Act, and some citizens present at the March 9th meeting remembered it with sorrow. After twenty-four years the slope had developed a growth of slim trees or saplings but still stood out in contrast to the mature woods on either side. Now, suddenly, it has been clear-cut again.

The cutting was discovered by an abutter who returned home on February 28 after a three-day absence. Commissioner Dave Dempsey was immediately contacted, and he issued an order to cease work. The Commission determined that the work performed violated the Orders of Conditions for both the Scenic Mountains Act and the Wetlands Protection Act.

In its meeting on March 9, the Commission heard from Mr. Levkoff, his architect, his contractor, his builder, two engineers, and his forestry consultant, among others. All expressed distress over the cutting and a wish to do what it takes to make things right. The landscape contractor, Steve Frechette of Washington, Massachusetts, acknowledged that although he had not personally cut the trees, he was "responsible" for the damage. One stipulation in the Order of Conditions was that the workers and contractor meet with a Commissioner seventy-two hours before beginning work, to go over details. Had this meeting occurred, the damage might have been avoided, but no meeting took place.

Mike Kulig of Berkshire Engineering in Lee, Mr. Levkoff's contractor, explained that the plan had been to "thin" the area, allowing some larger trees to grow more. Miscommunication resulted in clear-cutting the whole area, but the stumps and root systems are still in place, thanks to the snow cover at the time of the cutting.

Citizens spoke up. Kenn Bassler of Monterey pointed out that "control was lost somewhere" and that now people may feel a need to be constantly monitoring any further work. Laurily Epstein, an abutter, praised the Conservation Commissioners and thanked them for their vigilance.

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Levkoff property on Lake Garfield off Eaton Road before, in summer, and after clear cutting in late February.

Commissioner Rick Andrus said that most of the violation at the site occurred on the steep slope, with little cutting in the 100-foot buffer zone to the lake. Janet Cathcart, of Monterey, asked who failed in setting up the meeting seventy-two hours before beginning work. Mr. Frechette again stated, "It was my job."

Scott Jenssen responded as a citizen of the town asking, "How do you still have a job with these people? What are you doing here?" Mr. Jenssen had written a letter to the Conservation Commission, which he read aloud. In it he explained that he was speaking for himself and "many other members of our community" in that he is "perplexed" as to how anyone could go through a lengthy permitting process that was quite specific and limiting and then cut down all the trees. His letter expresses frustration and anger, making it clear that damage has been done not only to the land and its community of flora and fauna but to the human community as well.

Citizens repeatedly expressed their distress at the destruction of the natural scenery they have loved when seeing it from their boats on the lake, from next door, and from the opposite shore. The meeting ended with an agreement on the part of the applicant to draw up a restoration plan for the site. There may be some planting of small trees on the steep slope, which will require watering, staking, and nurturing. Clearly, restoration of trust is also needed in the neighborhood.

Mr. Levkoff will retain a consultant to write a plan for the land and provide it to the Commissioners by March 30 for their review. The Commission will retain its own consultant for comments, to return to the applicant. All parties are to attend the Conservation Commission's April 13 meeting, which of course is also open to the public. Most people present felt this violation to be an old scar reopened and the sooner mended, the better. Some spoke of making the site "better than before," others cautioned about the notion of improving upon natural processes.

The 8,700-square foot, $3.5 million house-building project proposed for land at the top of the slope, has not yet begun nor been issued a building permit. Mr. Levkoff's construction/project manager Carl Audia might have been speaking for the citizenry as well as the contractors when he said, "We have all been sick over this."

— Bonner McAllester

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Town Election Slate
Reaching Across the Aisle

The Democratic Caucus and the Republican Caucus are proud to have endorsed identical slates of sixteen candidates for our town offices. This example of cooperation is rarely seen elsewhere, but here in Monterey it is alive and well. The goal of both the caucuses is to find the best qualified candidates and hopefully to have a contest for every open elected position in town. However, this is not a likely outcome for a small town, so the result here has been reaching across the aisle and cooperating for the benefit of our community

Of the sixteen candidates for town offices, two are interested and excited about serving Monterey for the first time:

Josh Allentuck, Parks Commission: Josh has been an entrepreneur in the food industry and is currently a self-employed carpenter and is very excited about volunteering for our town after living here for thirteen years.

Shaylan Burkhart, Tree Warden: Shaylan was raised in Monterey and matriculated through our public school system. He is currently working as a carpenter and maintaining his farm. This will be the beginning of his service to the town.

Two other candidates have served on other committees or boards in the past and are willing to try a new committee assignment this year:

Gary Shaw, Park Commission: Gary previously served our town as a member of the Board of Assessors for nine years. His children learned to swim at the town beach and learned to skate at the pavilion. We are fortunate that now he is willing to be a member of the Park Commission.

Linda Thorpe, Town Clerk and Cemetery Committee: Linda is currently the Chair of the Cemetery Committee and is running for another term. She also is a Library Trustee and currently serves as our Assistant Town Clerk. The depth and breadth of her credentials, her ability to multitask, and her demeanor qualify her beyond anyone's doubts to be an outstanding Town Clerk.

The following twelve incumbents are showing a special devotion to Monterey in their willingness to continue in their positions:

Dean Amidon, Board of Appeals
Bob Gauthier, Board of Assessors
Dan Moriarty, Finance Committee
Steve Enoch, Board of Health
Lois Storch, Library Trustees
Denise Andrus, Library Trustees
Mark Makuc, Moderator
Bridget Krans, Parks Commission and Planning Board
Stephen Rose, Planning Board
Wayne Burkhart, Select Board

Remember to vote on Saturday, May 2, 2009. Your ballot is an important way to say thank you to those who give so much of their time and talents to keep our town government functioning in a healthy and honest manner.

— Muriel Lazzarini, Chair
Democratic Town Committee
— Mark Makuc, Chair
Republican Town Committee

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Town Election Candidates

There are no contested seats in May 2nd town election, but the *News* asked any candidates who wished to write letters introducing (or reintroducing) themselves.

Josh Allentuck, Park Commission

I have been living in the Berkshires the past eighteen years, thirteen of them in Monterey. During this time I have worked in the food industry, managing and working restaurant floors. That led me to open my own place, Allentuck's NY Delicatessen in Great Barrington, in 1998, which brought to the area a real taste of a New York Deli. After four years (that's eighty years in Deli life) I closed that chapter of my life and began another as a journeyman carpenter working by and for myself with a schedule that allows time for family. I have been married to Ginny for nineteen years with one son James, now twelve. We spend countless hours beachside at Lake Garfield and at Greene Park where James has started his budding baseball career. Having Greene Park and Lake Garfield in our back yard makes Monterey a very special place for us and by running for the empty seat on the Park Commission, I hope to be able to give back a little of what this town and its parks have given to us.

Shaylan Burkhart, Tree Warden

I was raised in Monterey, on Gould Farm where my parents are long-time staff members. I graduated from Mt. Everett Regional High School in 1997 and spent a year in Brazil as a Rotary Youth Exchange student. I attended university in England and in Canada, studying Portuguese and Italian language and literature, and received a B.A. with High Distinction from Trinity College at the University of Toronto. I was the happy recipient of Monterey's Wilson/McLaughlin Scholarship for all four years of my university studies.

After graduating, I was eager to return to Monterey to live and work on my family's farm property on Fairview Road. I spent two years as Facilities Manager at Berkshire Theatre Festival and then in 2003 turned to carpentry, my current occupation.

I have developed an interest in tree care with the help of my father, Wayne Burkhart, and my long-time friend (and certified arborist) William Conklin. I appreciate the work of Tree Warden Roger Tryon, especially the recent planting of new trees along Fairview Road!

My wife, Vanessa Halley, and I have a ten-month-old son, Wyn Christopher. I spend much of my spare time singing in choral ensembles and practicing guitar, and I enjoy cooking for friends and family.

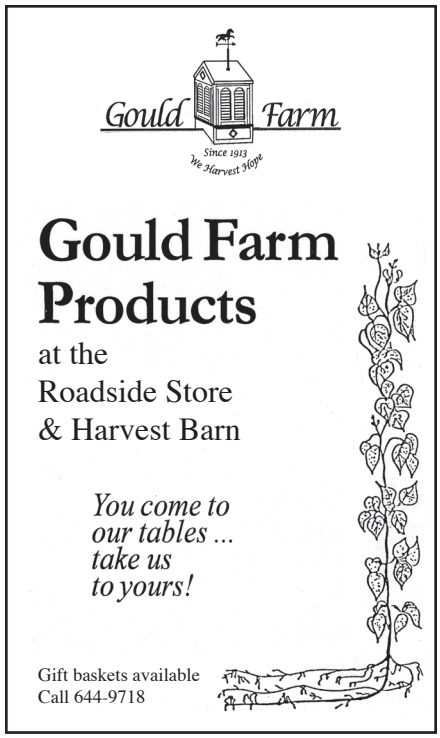
Denise Andrus, Library Trustees

My name is Denise Andrus, and I am married to Rick and the mother of Lauren (15) and Hunter (11).

As a part-time Art Teacher, I started to volunteer at the Monterey Library, offering a story and crafts to children, and the response was overwhelming. When a Trustee position opened, it seemed like a natural fit. My current term is expiring in a couple of months, and I would love to continue to work with Mark and the Board of Trustees, who have all showed me a true passion for our library.

Bridget Krans, Planning Board

I am excited to run for the Planning Board this May. I currently sit on the board as a replacement for a member who resigned. My appointment was approved by the Select board in December. Until that point I had been the Secretary for the board for almost a year. I truly enjoyed that position and valued the time attending the meetings and learning how the Planning Board works as well as our town's bylaws and building codes. It was a valuable learning experience that I am now putting to good use and hope to be able to continue to use by being elected as a member of the Planning Board in May. I am proud to represent a younger generation and am eager to continue building the strong community that is already present in Monterey.



Linda Thorpe, Town Clerk

For those of you who may not know me, let me introduce myself, as I am running for the office of Town Clerk. I am 63 years old and have lived in Monterey my entire life. I am married with three grown children and one grandson.

I have served the town in many capacities and on various town committees since the early 1980s, among them, the Fire Department as an EMT/ Firefighter from 1982–94, Library Trustee 1987 to the present, Cemetery Committee 1991 to the present, and, perhaps most relevant, as the Assistant Town Clerk from 1986 to the present. I graduated from the three-year program for City and Town Clerks at Salve Regina College and have taken continuing education classes annually. Following a process in the coming year, I will become a Certified Municipal Clerk (CMC), which is only available to sitting Clerks who continue to take education classes. I am also a Notary Public.

Aside from town duties I worked for the Southern Berkshire Regional School District as a Teachers' Aide for 19 years. I drive a school bus currently, as I have done for the past 26 years.

I hope you will consider me to be an ethical, dedicated, honest public servant when you vote on May 2, 2009.

Stephen Rose, Planning Board

I would like to express my interest in continuing to serve on the Monterey Planning Board. After serving on the Planning Board for the past four years, I believe my experience will be beneficial to the town's future planning process. My prior knowledge about two proposed subdivisions under review by the board is an example of the value of my continued service.

Currently I am employed as a news photographer for the *Boston Globe* and the *New York Times*. This job allows me flexibility and time to devote to public service.

I graduated from Monument Mountain Regional High School in 1980, received a BA in political science from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, in 1984, and was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to discuss the future of democracy with European students at the University of Colorado in Boulder in 1984.

Besides being a member of the Monterey Planning Board, I am a member of the Lake Buel Watershed Committee, Chairman of the Monterey Democratic Town Committee, and a participant of Berkshires for Progressive Change, a group that discusses regional, state, and national issues.

I would like to help shape the future of Monterey and influence policy on land division and development so the town maintains its rural beauty and continues to provide a vibrant and healthy community while minimizing impact on the small-town charm and the natural environment.

Dean P. Amidon, Board of Appeals

After many years as a member of the Board of Appeals, I feel that I am qualified to interpret our Town Zoning Bylaws that were accepted by the town in 1974. I was one of a group that originally wrote the bylaws, which are similar to the bylaws in the Town of Richmond.

Often during a hearing, I pause and read the purpose of these bylaws, part of which read, "to protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the inhabitants of Monterey."

Our committee is a diverse and dedicated group that spends many thoughtful hours deliberating before we arrive at a vote. The committee, which consists of five members, is required to have four favorable votes before a positive decision is made.

In addition to my experience on this committee, I am a registered Professional Civil Engineer and Registered Land Surveyor, which is of assistance in evaluating various plans, field inspections, and deliberations that we go through. I believe that all of our members have life professions and experiences that assist us in our decisions.

I would be pleased to attempt to answer any questions that may come to your mind about the board.

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Spring Monterey Cultural Council Events

Spring means getting outside in the woods, field, or garden, and to help us do that, the Monterey Cultural Council is sponsoring three events:

***Herbal First Aid*, Saturday, April 18**
10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Meetinghouse

Stockbridge resident Jane Kasten will draw from a lifetime of working with medicinal and culinary herbs to show us how we can use everyday plants to heal ourselves. Informed in her early years by the herbal tradition passed down by her Scandinavian grandmother and her mother and later through herbal training at the Center of the Light and Dr. Christopher's School of Natural Healing, Jane brings a wealth of knowledge and hands-on experience. She currently teaches gardening and produces her own herbal salves and tinctures. In 2005, her cooking skills were featured in *Martha Stewart Magazine*. This workshop is open to beginners and seasoned herbalists of all ages.

***Nature Walk at Bob's Way*, Saturday, April 25**
10 a.m.–noon, Rte.23, Monterey

The Cultural Council is pleased to offer again this year a nature hike led by Monterey's own naturalist Bonner McAllester. The group will meet at the parking lot for Bob's Way (marked with a sign) on the right side of Route 23 just past Mt. Hunger Road and before the Otis town line. If you have questions about the hike, call Bonner at 528-9385.

***Edible Wild Plants of the Northwest*, Friday, May 8**
7–8:30 p.m., Monterey Meetinghouse

John Root, a botanist and educator from Amherst, will speak about our region's edible wild plants, their availability, uses, and how to prepare them. Root holds a B.A. degree in biology from Oberlin College, has done graduate study in botany and education, and is a certified secondary school science teacher. He founded the Pioneer Valley Mycological Society and has led many interpretive programs about wild plants and nature appreciation for both young people and adults.

All the above events are free and open to everyone. Our thanks to the Monterey United Church of Christ for providing its community room for the two plant workshops, and to the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the town of Monterey for funding these three events.

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Feng Shui at April 15 Community Dinner

A very attentive audience at the March Potluck Dinner listened to a knowledgeable panel of local gardening experts discuss vegetable gardening in Monterey. At times you could hear a pin drop, and at others there were multiple questions and lively discussions. Many thanks to Steve and Sally Pullen of Greenhaven Farm, Steve Enoch of Gould Farm, and Bonner McAllester, who graciously filled in for an ailing Anna Duryea of Bracken Brae Farm. The suggestion was made that we have a "Harvest Potluck" in the fall with locally and Monterey-grown dishes to enjoy the fruits of our labors.

For the April Potluck we are happy to welcome back Jeanette Maguire, who will tell us more about the art of Feng Shui. Feng Shui is the ancient tradition of altering the flow of energy in your home or business through the manipulation of furnishings and the use of color to effect powerful changes in your life. Jeanette is a second-generation Feng Shui practitioner with a degree in design. She lives in North Egremont and consults and teaches throughout the Northeast. She says, "An environment with good Feng Shui creates an invigorating yet peaceful sanctuary while yielding health, wealth, intimacy, and vigorous self-esteem."

Please join us at the April 15 (tax day!) Monterey Potluck Dinner at 6 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of the Monterey Meetinghouse. Bring a dish to share, with a serving utensil and silverware and a plate for yourself. All are welcome!

— Kyle Pierce

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Record-A-Thon for Blind and Dyslexic

Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D) seeks to set new records this year for number of hours of recorded audio books. The event, held the week of May 4, is scheduled every year to increase awareness of RFB&D and to substantially increase studio production. Community leaders are invited to participate as guest readers and to learn more about the organization. Past guest readers have included State Sen. Ben Downing and Shakespeare & Company's Tina Packer. Many regular volunteers also donate additional hours during the week, and local businesses give gift certificates to the reader who records the most.

Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic (RFB&D) is a nonprofit volunteer organization that records textbooks and other educational material for students who have visual, learning, and physical disabilities. Its services are used throughout the U.S.

Anyone interested in finding out more can contact the Lenox studio at 413-637-0889 or go to www.rfbd.org.

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From the Tax Collector

The actual Real Estate and Personal Property tax bills for fiscal year 2009 have been mailed. The fourth quarter tax is due May 1, 2009. If you did not receive your bill, please contact the tax collector's office (413-528-1443 x117). Any questions regarding assessments or abatements should be directed to the Board of Assessors at 413-528-1443 x115. They must receive applications for abatements by May 1, 2009.

Park Com. Needs Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to help break down the skating rink on April 4 at 10 a.m. Refreshments will be provided. Questions? Call Valerie at 528-9222.

A great big THANK YOU goes to our volunteer icemakers, Steve Graves, Rick Andrus, and Mark Makuc. These gentlemen worked many cold hours to make sure our skating rink was up and running.

Monterey Library Notes

The latest innovation to the CWMARS software is especially suited to the children. If you are looking in the online catalog, you will see under "Other searches" the new choice of KidsCatalog. This will be great especially for kids who have had trouble when looking for library materials, especially by subject, and have gotten results that include adult books. The new KidsCatalog will only show those items specifically cataloged as children's, so there may be suitable materials that don't show in it, but it is a good place to start, and if you find what you need you don't have to go into the complete catalog. One feature I find especially fun is that one way to look for subjects is to click on pictures — for instance, click on the picture of animals, then amphibians, then frogs, and you will then get a list of the books on CWMARS about frogs. If you'd like a demonstration, please come on down to the Monterey Library!

— Mark Makuc, Library Director

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Free Film, April 18
Mountaintop Removal

We will get the jump on Earth Day with a screening of the prize-winning documentary *Mountaintop Removal* on Saturday, April 18, at 7:00 p.m. in the Meetinghouse basement. We can make our personal connection with the hilltown residents of West Virginia, whose water has turned black, whose homes and property have been flooded repeatedly, and whose landscape has been altered on a monumental scale. We meet a woman who has discovered there is arsenic in the water she and her four-year old have been drinking.

Mountaintop removal is a method of coal "mining" that entails blasting the tops off whole mountains and then filling the stream valleys with debris and tailings. As resident Ed Wiley says of a decapitated mountain, "It don't grow back."

Wiley steps up to fight Big Coal, particularly on behalf of his granddaughter whose elementary school is less than four hundred feet downhill from a coal slurry pond of 2.8 billion gallons of toxic waste. We follow Wiley on his walk from Charleston to Washington, DC, raising awareness and funds (pennies) to take on the Massey Coal Company.

This is a moving spectacle, but what has it got to do with us? Everything. We are Appalachian people, too. And we use electricity and drink water. Most of America's electricity comes from coal, and more than a third of our coal comes from Appalachia.

Come see the film, make the connection, meet the hilltown activists. Their courage and organizing will boost our spirits, pick us up, inspire us to stand and speak. Pay attention to Earth Day, pay attention to the Earth.

The film is 74 minutes long. Music by Donna the Buffalo and other great southern mountain artists. For information call 528-9385 (Bonner McAllester).

Library Recent Acquisitions

Please remember that these titles are just a few of the approximately 800 new items we get each year—and that through CWMARS we are just a click away from accessing a collection of nine million items!

DVDs
Twilight
Australia
The Boy in Striped Pajamas
Elegy
Bolt
Igor

New Adult Fiction
Handle with Care, Jodi Picoult
The Associate, John Grisham
Promises in Death, JD Robb
Night and Day, Robert Parker
Paths of Glory, Jeffrey Archer
Death and the Lit Chick, G. M. Malliet
Ghengis Bones of the Hills, Conn Iggulden
About Face, Donna Leon
Corsair, Clive Cussler
Malice, Lisa Jackson

Adult Nonfiction
One Square Inch of Silence, Gordon Hempton
The Thoreau You Don't Know, Robert Sullivan
The Great Decision, Cliff Sloan
Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths about Science and Religion, Ronald Numbers
The Wikipedia Revolution, Andrew Lih

Young Adult
Jellicoe Road, Melina Marchetta
Watchmen, Alan Moore
Wintergirls, Laurie Anderson

Children's
How to Raise Mom & Dad, Josh Lerman
Anything but Typical, Nora Baskin
Panaroma, Fani Marceau
The Trouble Begins at 8: A Life of Mark Twain in the Wild, Wild West, Sid Fleischman
Scat, Carl Hiaasen
Fashion Kitty and the Unlikely Hero

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From the Meetinghouse . . .

But Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." —John 20:24–25

I'll admit it: I love superheroes. It's a love that lay dormant for a number of years, but I am now the mother of two young sons, which means superheroes are a part of my life again. Nearly five years old, Toby's favorite is Spider-Man, of course, because Peter Parker, a high school student, is just a boy himself. He answers to teachers who call him on misbehavior, just like Toby. He gets picked on by bigger kids, just like Toby. He has a motherly old woman who fusses over him, (sad to say) just like Toby. At two-and-a-half, Jack's caught the fascination, precociously so. "Pshew! Pshew!" he says as he runs around the house. "I webbed you," he tells me as I empty the dishwasher yet again.

As for me, I like Batman best. I like his dark side, that brooding, tormented awareness that this alter-ego thing makes him more similar to the super villains he fights than to the innocent Gothamites he protects, the butler he confides in, and the woman he loves, though from afar, and saves every few weeks from certain and comically terrible death. The fact that he is unbelievably rich, by way of a multinational corporation that does only good works in the world, adds a lot to an already appealing guy. And to top it all off, he tends to have a "strong chin," which is of concern when casting an actor whose chin beneath the mask will be the only facial feature to show. Disturbed? Yes. Deranged? Maybe. Yet, somehow through it all, he makes my eyelashes flutter.

I'd be embarrassed to admit this if I didn't think most people harbor some love for the superhero. After all, these stories are among the oldest we tell. The ancient Greek Odysseus was, say, the Superman of his era—big, strong, indestructible, and most of all motivated by loyalty and love for his Lois Lane, Penelope. His comrade in arms, Achilles, was perhaps the Batman of his day—powerfully deadly and more than a little spooky. Of course, the one known in Greek as Heracles and in Latin as Hercules sets the standard for all superheroes, even giving us the word by which we could speak of them as heroes. According to the classical definition, a hero is, as Hercules was, a demigod and one who, in the face of danger and adversity or from a position of weakness, displays courage and the will for self-sacrifice for some greater good. It's crucial, though, that only seldom is such self-sacrifice actually necessary, and when so it's largely symbolic. They're burdened with pained hearts, for example, but they retain their power.

Thomas, I think, wanted such a hero in Jesus—this disciple who's become notorious for having doubted, so much so that he's become the final word in the moral of the Christian story to many people's thinking: "Don't doubt; don't be like Thomas." And really, it seems Jesus set him up for such a fate among the pious. After all, it was he who said to this maligned disciple, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." This is a wink to the readers of John's gospel, those down the centuries who would never actually see the resurrected Jesus and so would need some encouragement—we who aren't so blessed as to witness the Resurrection but are even more so blessed to believe in it anyway. But I resist this conventional wisdom, because Thomas doesn't seem to have doubted that the other disciples saw Jesus. If he doubted that, he'd likely have said, "Unless I see his face and hear his voice for myself, I won't believe." Instead, what he said was this: "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hand …" This is to say that Thomas doesn't seem to have doubted the Resurrection—that God is life eternal and love victorious; he seems to have doubted the crucifixion—that God would suffer death.

And, you know, I think people still doubt this. Moreover, I think many Christians doubt this—and often the same people who castigate Thomas. Whenever we hear of God acting in wrath to avenge his enemies, we hear doubt that Jesus took on the cross. Whenever we imply that God is at work in making rich people rich and poor people poor—the Prosperity Gospel that casts the wealthy as deserving their wealth and the poor as deserving their

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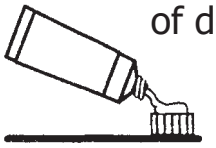

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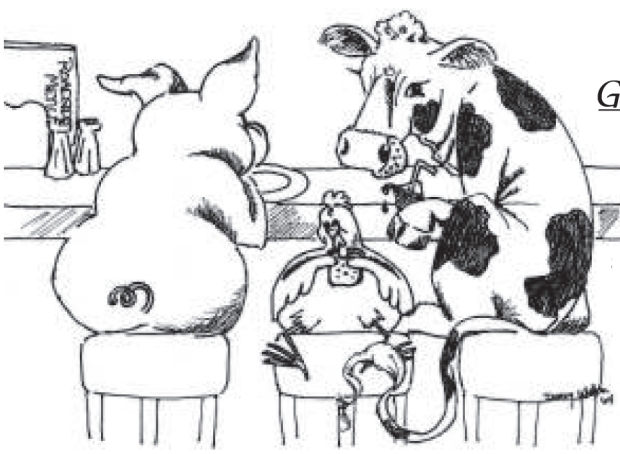

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destitution—we reveal our doubt that God's Son took on the cross. Whenever we speak of God conforming to the value system that we live by in the world, we confess a doubt that God Himself suffered that we might be saved from systems that thrive on the belief that human suffering is divinely ordained. Such doubt in Christ crucified sounds like this: "Blessed are the aggressors, for they will inherit the earth"; but belief sounds like this: "Blessed are the meek …" Doubt in the cross of Christ sounds like this: "Blessed are the power-mongers, for they will be called children of God"; but belief sounds like this: "Blessed are the peacemakers …" Doubt that God would come not from on high in power and might but from below in vulnerability and compassion sounds like this: "Blessed are the strong in faith, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"; but belief that God would come to us not from on high in power and might but from below in vulnerability and compassion sounds like this: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

When Jesus first appeared to the disciples who would later tell Thomas, "We have seen the Lord," he said to them, "Peace be with you." Here he was, returned to the very people who had betrayed him and denied him and abandoned him to death, and what he said was this: "Peace be with you." This was no mere greeting: "Peace, man." This was no mere wishing them well: "May you find peace." This was a commissioning; this was a command: "Peace be with you. As God sent me, so I send you." And it's something of a disappointment to have such a reappearance be so uneventful. If we're looking for an avenger, we'll have to look elsewhere. If we're looking for comeuppance, we'll have to move on. There's nothing to see here—no retributive justice, no tit-for-tat, just a quiet subverting of the powers of death. And it's something of a disappointment, if we're all jacked up on Jason Bourne (another of my favorites), to encounter the still wounded, yet forgiving, Jesus on Easter eve, and moreover to be invited, "Follow me." But so we do and we are.

— Elizabeth Goodman

Family Cabaret at Sandisfield Arts Center

On Saturday evening, April 18, at 7 p.m., the Sandisfield Arts Center will host its opening event of the season; a fun-filled family cabaret featuring a variety of talent from Berkshire County. Tickets are $10 for adults, $5 for children. Proceeds from the event will go toward a new sound system for the Arts Center.

The evening is described as "wild and "wooly" and features everything from clowning to tango. Blues, ballet, hip-hop, accordion, magic, stand-up comedy, and Latin rhythms offer something for everyone. Farmington River Elementary School students will exhibit their drawings in the downstairs gallery.

The Sandisfield Arts Center is located on Hammertown Road, off Route 57, in Sandisfield. Once a Baptist Meeting House and orthodox synagogue, the historic building now serves as a vibrant community arts center with affordable programming. For directions and more information, visit www.sandisfieldartscenter.org.

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Sunday, 8:00 am–1:00 pm

Clear-cuts and Getting to Yes (or No)

Two kids in a sandbox. One has a steamshovel (okay, a … remote-controlled earth-altering device, electronic). The other one wants it and makes a grab. First kid lets out a squawk and clutches belonging more tightly. Second kid clobbers first, first returns clobber with interest.

In steps judicial figure of authority and mature reason.

"What seems to be the problem, fellow humans?"

"Waaah. She won't let me play with her remote-control earth-altering device!"

"Well … It's MINE."

"Hmmm. I have an idea that will solve everything. You can share!"

Brilliant. Anyone who has played these roles in any setting knows the look on the first kid's face and what goes through her mind. "Share? No way. I know what that means. It means I gotta give over my swell belonging to that clobbering fellow human for awhile. I don't feel like it and I shouldn't have to because it is MINE."

Years back the Monterey Conservation Commission made a stab at composing a Town Wetlands Bylaw that would be specific to Monterey and address troubles we'd had or might have in the future. The idea went to a Town Meeting, and I'll never forget one of the many citizens who stood to oppose the notion. He was a former member of the commission, an independent-minded Yankee who knew his rights and drove an earth-altering device for a living.

"I believe that when a man has some land, he should be able to do whatever he wants on it."

In our family, this famous statement has been condensed to "When a man has some land" and has been useful for twenty-five years. It brings us smiles, rueful, and a cold bath of reality illustrating many folks' relationship with their mother.

Yes, the land is our mother. I used to think this was romantic and sentimental Native American wannabee claptrap: "The Earth Is Our Mother. Our Father Sun, Our Mother Earth." I was a tough case.

Now I am an old mother myself and so is the Earth. We'd like to do all we can to nourish our children, but it's tough with "When a man has some land" beating on us. I was in an Old Mothers Support Group recently with the Earth, and this is what she said.

"Each of my kids thinks she is the only one! I look like such a big and generous

mom that each kid thinks she can have a piece of me, but in my long life I see that she will have kids and they will and they will and all of them want a piece and feel like it is THEIRS and they should be able to do whatever they want with it. Me, that is. It boils down to math. Infinite universe, yes, but finite mom. I guess the guy who said, 'When a man has some land,' was not looking beyond his own nose, his own ideas of what would be a grand thing to do on or to his land. Me, that is."

Earth had the floor and she went on with this theme. We were all nodding and going, "Yes, yes, sister. Been there, been there a hundred times."

"Take this business on A Certain Road, Monterey, Massachusetts, North American Northeast Region. Guy buys some land. (Trouble can only follow, if you ask me—whoever heard of selling bits of Mom?) He has vision of fine home, improvements on the landscape. (Wait! He wants to 'improve' his mom?? No, no, no. No one improves on Mom.)

"So he tucks into it, only to discover that other people in the town and in the neighborhood don't agree with his notion of "better." For instance, the fox pups in their den, ready to emerge in the sapling forest. They do not agree, as they preferred a safe and shady dooryard for their vulnerable childhood. The returning yellowthroat, thinking to nest in the old neighborhood, does not adore the wide open spaces that have taken the place of the sapling forest, thanks to the folks with the earth-altering devices and their own ideas of what is better.

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"There are even human neighbors who do not think things are now better. They liked this bit of Mom the way she was. Or at least they liked it better than it is now. Their right to a more beautiful mom has been trampled, along with the rights of the young foxes and warblers. And all because a man has some land, which is actually a piece of his momma."

Earth smiles that beat-up smile she has. She loves her children equally and just wishes they'd be good and quit fighting over her bits. It's all any mother wants, really.

What to do, going forward? How do we get to "yes" on this? There's therapy, also attempts at agreement based upon the civil law. You'd like to think there is another law, called common law, which is about that finite mom thing. It's based upon conscience, lessons learned, social justice for all, and especially sharing that is not seen as taking. It's about the idea that although she is MINE, my mom, she is also the mom of everyone and everything. All of which have a right, but only when it does not trample.

— Bonner J. McAllester

CET Earth Day Clothing, Textile Drive

On Saturday, April 25 and Sunday, April 26, the Center for Ecological Technology (CET) will hold its 14th annual Textile Drive to collect old clothing and household textiles for reuse and recycling. CET is located at 112 Elm Street in Pittsfield. The event will be held in partnership with Goodwill Industries of the Berkshires to help celebrate the 39th anniversary of Earth Day. The collection is open to all Berkshire county residents as well as people living in southern Vermont and eastern New York State.

Materials will be accepted at CET on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. In addition, residents may drop clothing in the metal bin at the back of the parking lot at the Berkshire South Regional Community Center at 15 Crissey Road in Great Barrington from April 11 until April 26.

All types of clothing are accepted—including sweaters, shirts, skirts, pants, jackets, overcoats, and raincoats. Blankets, gloves, socks, paired shoes and winter boots, sheets, towels, and curtains are also acceptable. Clothing must be clean, dry, and packed in strong plastic bags, such as garbage or lawn-leaf bags. Rugs, carpeting, and pillows will not be accepted. Please do not bring clothes on hangers. During this year's drive, CET will also collect donations of non-perishable food items in support of Goodwill's Food Pantry program. Food donations will be accepted only at CET's Elm Street office.

Goodwill resells the wearable clothing at its local stores and sends the remainder to the textile market. Additionally, Goodwill uses the collection, sorting, and retail sales as job training for individuals with barriers to employment.

The event is coordinated with assistance from the Southern Berkshire Solid Waste Management District. During the drive, CET will offer education about reuse and recycling to the Berkshire community. Clothing collected during the drive will be resold when possible or will be recycled, and donations of these materials provide a way for the community to support CET's environmental programs. Last year's Textile Drive netted more than 26,000 pounds of materials.

For more information about the textile drive, please call Rob Tocchio at CET, 413-445-4556 ext. 30 or 800-238-1221 ext. 30, or visit www.cetonline.org.

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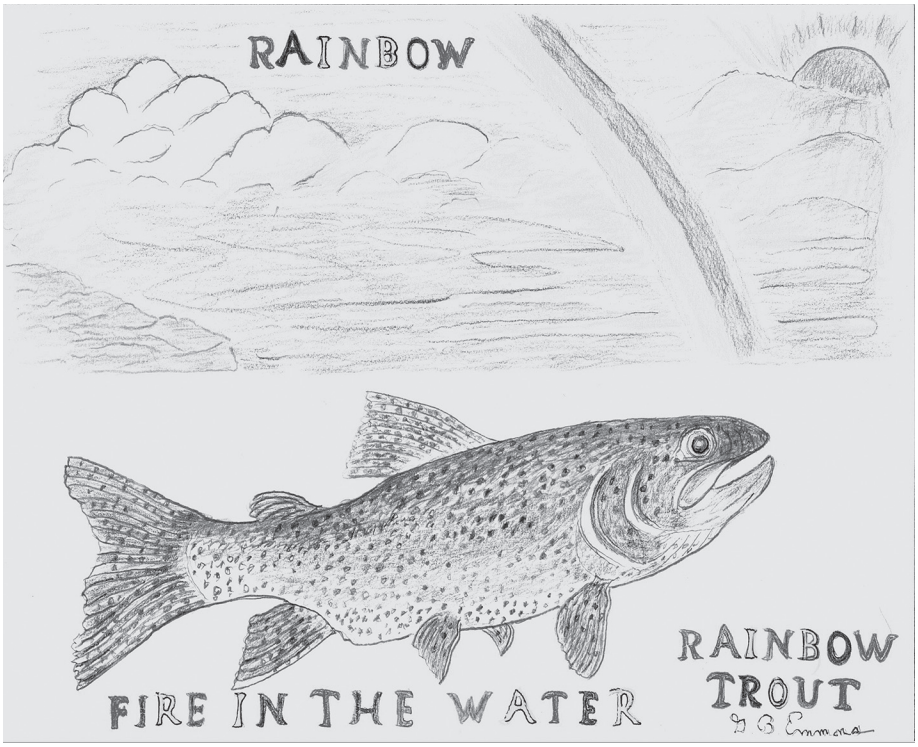

With the melted snow and ice out, Lake Garfield slowly filled after the floodgates were closed in mid February, and now the open-water fishing season is attracting anglers to our shores. The first trout pulled up from the deep, dark depths are similarly colorless having spent the winter in dim light with meager nourishment. The markings are determined by the strength of light rays that pass through the retina of the eye, sending messages by way of the optic nerve to adapt their appearance to camouflage with the surroundings.

As the amount of sun brightens, so do the trout, notably the rainbow and brook trout, whose sides begin to gleam with a colorful glow, especially when they are ready to spawn. Their organs produce solar-like energy from skin cells called iridocytes that resemble the optic effect of a fire in the water. Human beings are also turned on by longer hours of sunshine, but more psychologically through improved morale.

The atmospheric phenomena from which the rainbow trout gets its name is itself made up of droplets of water reflecting light back to the eye and acting like a prism breaking it into the color spectrum. The watercolors of the pale blue sky of early spring and the faint greening of foliage as the hills gradually come alive before our eyes are ethereal and almost see-through. At the end of the day, the reflected glow from the setting sun on the surface of the lake is the promise of another dawn still to come into our lives.

Perhaps the greatest artist and painter of atmospheric landscapes was Joseph M. W. Turner (1775–1851), the English master of light whose impressionistic use of color and light was well ahead of his time and whose works were recently on exhibition at the Clarke Museum in Williamstown. Just before he died, he was said to have remarked that "the Sun is god." If you happen to have an eye for color and wish to take his appraisal as gospel, we both might quote the psalm from the Good Book that says, "Heaven and Earth are full of thy glory …"

— George B. Emmons

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Letter from College

Go Local? Go National?

A great deal of evidence indicates that the message "go local" is taking root. Many people are trying to eat local—and healthier—and in the Berkshires, and we even have Berkshares. The messages running through national discourse now about the power of communities and the importance of public service are a personal reminder to me that the strength of our society cannot be measured just in economic terms, but also by the way we treat each other and interact when life is tough.

After reading about Michelle Obama's new White House garden, I started thinking about the multiple exciting and promising angles of such a project. I ended up considering that maybe it indicates a new interplay between the national and local levels in government and in society. This is just a guess, but I imagine I am not alone in the following sentiment: during the second Bush Administration, I felt distanced and generally irrelevant as a citizen. Even the small gestures by the Obama Administration to reach out and connect to the public feed a new sense of hope for me.

Every spring when I was young, I used to spend time in the garden with my mother. One afternoon in the garden when I was around four, my mom was transplanting her young broccoli seedlings. She moved down the row in front of me, and I hopped along behind her nibbling off all the green leaves. If you might be wondering why on earth I would do such a thing, hark back to the days of children's books—Peter Rabbit anyone? I wanted my chamomile tea for the stomachache that was sure to follow—except I spit out all the leaves.

Mom and I laugh about it now, but I vaguely remember some hours spent growing new seedlings for her. When I was a bit older, I sold sunflowers at the farm for twenty-five cents apiece, or five for a dollar. Even though now I spend much less time at home, seeing those large waving plants in summertime brings back a lot of memories. The garden, and living off the food from it, is a long-standing practice in human history; it is also one that many do not experience anymore.

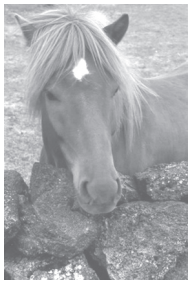
Still, the trend is toward going local, and as someone who is pretty much a homegrown local, I think it is a great mindset and movement. Sometimes I wonder about the broader possibilities, and Mrs. Obama's garden is one of those instances. I think that although we look to the national government to fix things, especially in times of crisis, we forget that we are a force. Ideas about better eating, local eating, and responsible eating are powerful. The "room for debate" section on the *New York Times* website poses the question of why no First Family since Eleanor Roosevelt planted a garden at the White House; a number of explanations are given.

It seems to me that a new level of exchange is taking place among varying levels within American society. A garden on the White House lawn in the Executive Branch microcosm sets an example that perhaps others will seek to emulate. We here in the Berkshires clearly have a jumpstart on things; maybe citizens are the real trendsetters and can help shape the Washington microcosm that the media scrutinize twenty-four hours a day. Perhaps local initiatives are going to have more opportunities to "go national," and in doing so have a much greater impact. I am being a bit generic and optimistic of course, not everything that works locally will work nationally.

The Garden, capitalized for my own personal purposes, is one example of how the Obama family may be a bit more in touch with some of the new and exciting threads that our society is spinning. Gardens are hard work; anyone who has one can vouch for that, and my mother will be among the first, though it must also be noted that in the same breath that she always says how much she loves it. Not everyone can have a garden, but examples like the First Lady's can be powerful. Communities need to go local, but going local should not stop there: local should make sure to keep going national. It is a time for ideas; it is a time for participation.

I am proud to be from the Berkshires, proud to be from Monterey. Finally, I am hopeful that now Americans everywhere can provide examples of what we want our lives and our country to stand for, and that we will be heard. I look forward to the arrival of spring when the world comes alive, and I hope that Mrs. Obama's garden is a sign of better times to come.

— Tarsi Dunlop



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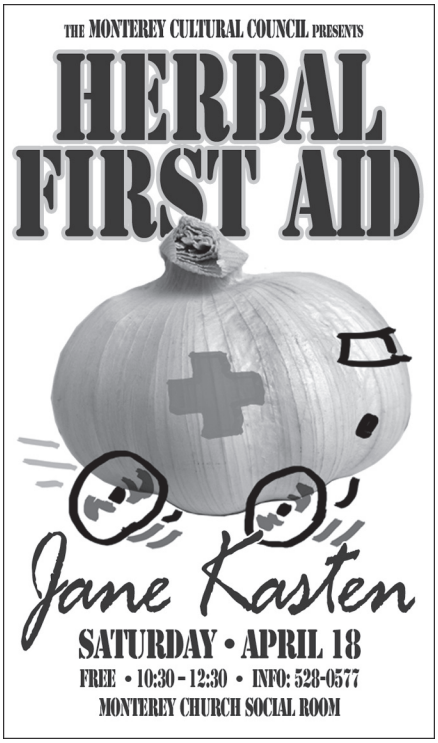
THE MONTEREY CULTURAL COUNCIL PRESENTS
HERBAL FIRST AID
Jane Kasten
SATURDAY • APRIL 18
FREE • 10:30 - 12:30 • INFO: 528-0577
MONTEREY CHURCH SOCIAL ROOM

Outdoors at Last

This past winter's colossal ice storm damaged some huge old trees around here, but fortunately it left most of the branches on my biggest oak tree intact. As usual I resisted getting up this morning and chose to watch the finches gather in those branches right outside my bedroom window instead. They perch in dense groups like last year's leaves, waiting for their turn to zip down and peck away at the last of the season's birdseed. In the next few days the bird feeders will have to come down to avoid attracting the bears and raccoons—in fact they should have been down already.

The seed-eating critters are just a few of the animals that will cross through my property as the weather warms. Pretty soon they'll have my vegetable garden to dine on if I don't get things set up to keep them out. To be fair to my gorgeous dog Bailey, she's really good at keeping most of the daytime marauders at bay. At night, however, it's another story. All too often I have responded to animal damage after the fact, while taking the varmint's name in vain of course. This spring seems like a great time to put a few more protective measures in place before those adorable seedlings start popping out all over the place.

Many methods are available to discourage animals from getting into the garden, but I am only going to talk about excluding them with physical structures. The little beasts have as much right to live in the neighborhood as I do, after all. The lettuce patch just isn't important enough to me to start killing them off! And while no method is perfect, some well-placed fences can keep most of the garden intact.

Working from the ground up seems like the best approach. The burrowing animals, like chipmunks and voles, require a barrier to keep them from tunneling right under my raised beds. Remember that little rodents, like voles and field mice, can squeeze through the tiniest openings (just ask my cats), so a metal screen with ¼-inch mesh is required to keep them out. Plastic won't work because the rodents can chew right through it. Hardware cloth will do the trick. Dig a trench around the outside of the bed about 12-18" deep, and lay the mesh in the trench so that it bends outward at the bottom. Hardware cloth is nasty stuff to cut, so buy it in 3-foot wide rolls if possible so that a good 6–12 inches sticks out above the ground. The visible mesh will help to keep rabbits out of the garden as well. You may want to bend the metal edge over or tape it to avoid scratching yourself on the rough edge.

Here's an idea if you have really huge problems with burrowing animals like woodchucks. You can lay a barrier of hardware cloth underneath the entire raised bed, if you are building a new one. Roll out the mesh and tack it down before you add soil and compost to a level of about 12 to 18 inches. Once your aboveground fence is in, voila! No more half-eaten tomatoes!

After installing a ground barrier, it is time to consider the rest of the fence. If rabbits are your problem, the fence doesn't need to be more than 3 feet high. Some hardware centers will sell metal fencing with smaller mesh at the bottom and larger spaces at the top—this can help keep the weight down and make it easier to work with. Plastic fences, while not ideal, are lightweight and generally less expensive than metal. A wood fence looks the best but may not be worth the cost for the vegetable garden; too many animals can chew holes into it. A good way to compromise is to use wooden fence posts and metal or plastic mesh. And don't forget to include a gate or some other way of getting yourself in there.

Finally, we have the problem of deer. When people want to protect their ornamental gardens from deer, I usually recommend plant varieties that deer don't especially like to eat. The vegetable garden is a whole different story. Edible plants exist that deer don't go for, but then I don't either. Fennel and Jerusalem artichoke may be great, but I'm not going to all the trouble of growing vegetables for them! So the deer will just have to stay out.

Deer of course are notorious jumpers, so fence height is the first consideration. The fence should be 8 feet high at least, but there are ways to get around the height requirement. If you have the space, you can install a 6-foot fence at a 45-degree angle pointing outward from your property. The angle causes confusion about the height and depth of the fence, and deer typically will not try to jump it. Another method, space permitting, that works very well is the double fence. If you install two fences about 6 feet apart, the deer will not jump into the space between and thus will not end up in your garden. Deer fencing, while effective, can be very expensive. If you prefer you can try electrified fence lines. A number of companies make solar-powered electric fences that work very well and keep your utility bills down in the bargain.

By now you may be wondering why you wanted to grow vegetables in the first place. Yes, it's worth it, so let's get back to

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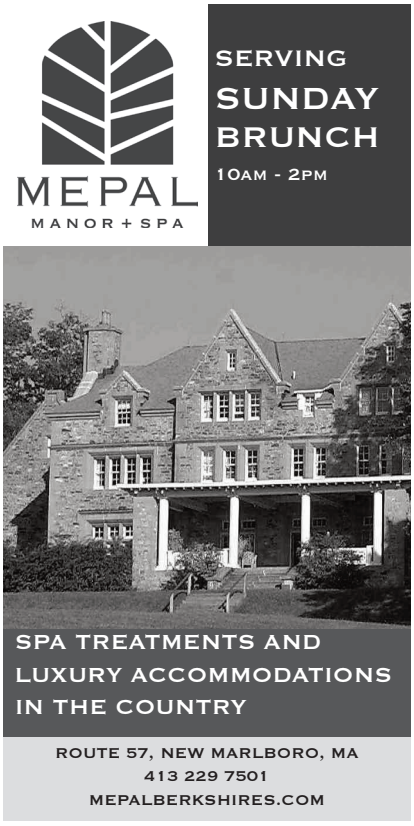
those seedlings you may have started last month. Remember the trays under lights or on the windowsill? My baby lettuces have grown to a respectable 2 inches at present, and it will soon be time to get them into the cold frame. First they need to be hardened off. By hardening off I mean introducing the plants to the air and sun outside, which is a good deal harsher than their sheltered upbringing so far. Each day I bring the trays outside for a few hours and bring them back in before it gets cold. This way the plants' cell walls strengthen and become hardier. It sounds like a lot of work, but don't forget we were going to start small. Right now I've only got two trays to deal with. After a few days to a week the plants are ready to face the new world. I've watered the soil in the cold frames, and soon the transplanted lettuce greens will get fat and happy.

Next step—the crops that need planting outdoors. It is very tempting to plant carrots and peas right now. After a few days of warm weather the annual amnesia about winter starts to set in. Better to wait a few more weeks until the soil has a chance to warm up and dry out a bit. Baby carrots, here we come.

— Ruth Green



PO Box 9, 01245

The Dog Ate Their Homework

To the Editor:

We have every reason to feel sad. Very sad. A slope on Lake Garfield was clear-cut "by mistake" at the end of February. It is the same slope that was clear-cut in 1985, so this was a violation perpetuated on an already violated property.

Neighbors of the property learned on Saturday, February 21, that unapproved logging was occurring on the slope at 26 Eaton Road. Members of the Conservation Commission (ConCom) were alerted. Within a few hours, three ConCom members were on the case. After reviewing the damage, they issued stop-work orders for violations of both the Scenic Mountain Act and the Watershed Protection Act.

One wondered how the owners would react. One wondered if it would be considered just "a mistake." One wondered if the logger would be made to take the fall, obviating the necessity for anyone in a position of authority to do anything other than say how sorry he or she was. One wondered if we would hear a grown-up's version of "the dog ate my homework." After the ConCom meeting on March 9, one no longer wondered. One knows.

The landscaper said the logger went to work three days too early. And the landscaper is so sorry. The architect was kept awake at night because she felt so badly. The engineer pointed out that because there were only saplings on the hillside (remember—this is land that had already been trashed), this clear-cutting gave them an opportunity to improve things. And the property owner, who drove in from his home on Long Island for the meeting, talked about how much he and his wife appreciated the peace and serenity they felt when they saw the land, and how very sorry they were that a horrible mistake had been made.

So, you see, it was the dog that ate the homework. There were some trees. Now there aren't. Ooops.

The owner hired a forester who sits on the West Stockbridge ConCom. The forester said that because of the type and depth of soil on the slope, not to mention ledge, it would not be desirable to plant large trees where the large trees used to grow. Instead there should be a few very small trees planted, leaving one puzzled about how putting in a few twigs constitutes restitution.

There is now a big scar on the landscape of Lake Garfield. It hurts. Anyone who lives on or uses the lake will see it and will be sad. And angry. And understand that something sacred has been violated. There is a great deal of outrage in town about this environmental damage. No amount of "I'm sorry" is going to make this issue go to ground. Unless and until new property owners, landscapers, architects, engineers, and contractors understand the necessity of obeying the rules of environmental protection, of respecting the integrity of the land, of realizing that humans simply cannot improve on nature, we shall continue to experience these outrages when a beloved part of our community is vandalized.

I am thankful for the time and energy the ConCom has invested in this case. They will have to spend more time on it, more energy, more hours of listening to people dance around their responsibility. I am grateful that our ConCom takes their mission seriously, particularly when landowners do not.

My name is Laurily Epstein and I am an abutter.

— Laurily Epstein

ॐ

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The Easter Incident

It rolled like a tank. It *looked* like a tank. When it came to a rocking stop at the curb, my eleven-year-old heart fell.

This thing was a whale! A huge gray '53 Oldsmobile sedan, with a boxy body and minimal chrome, the very antithesis of the racy model I was hoping for. And when I leaned in through the window to look at the drab interior, my disappointment turned to despair.

"You're just test drivin' this car, right Dad?" I asked hopefully.

"Nope," he beamed, "already paid for."

"But it's gray," I whined. "Even the inside's gray."

"Yep. Got a good price on it. Gray's the best color anyway."

"And the tires are *black*, Dad. Maybe we could change 'em for white sidewalls."

"No good," he scoffed. "Show the dirt."

My back was against the wall. As he lovingly caressed the steering wheel, I took my last shot. "Well then, how about a two-tone paint job?"

He looked at me like I had lost my mind. "What? Two tone cars are for *pimps*!"

Then, a couple of months later, General Motors introduced the wraparound windshield, a stunning model change that revolutionized the car industry and rendered the '53s pathetically passé. And I knew that once my father made a decision, he stuck with it. This stodgy icon would be a part of my persona until I graduated from college.

The car dynamic between us wasn't all bad, however. Despite the abject poverty of his Russian childhood and his immigrant sense of propriety, Dad actually allowed me to drive the Olds as soon as we got it. Not on the roads, of course. But on Sunday mornings, while folks were in church, he drove me to the baseball park on the edge of town and let me wheel around the grassy outfield. A powerful, hulking, four-thousand-pound animal-on-wheels under my control, and Dad in the passenger seat, nodding his approval. It was far from my dream of a candy-apple-red convertible, but at that moment nothing could have been headier.

There was a catch, however. For the privilege of driving the car, I had to keep it clean.

"Sure, Dad," I answered eagerly. "I'll go get the hose."

"Hose? No sir! Waste of water. One bucketful and one rag."

"For the whole car?"

"You heard me. And I'll be inspecting it when you're done."

After my first effort he pointed to the windshield and shook his head. "No good. Streaks. And what about the tires?"

"But you said I can only use one bucket of water!"

The Russian eyes narrowed.

"You wanna drive it?"

"Yeah …"

He swept his arm at the car and walked away.

It took several more false starts before I got it right. First the windows, while the water and rag were clean. Next, wring out the rag and dry the glass so as not to leave spots. Then came the roof and body, same technique. And finally, those sad black tires. Try as I might to make them shine, they remained dull and unexciting. Out of desperation, I came up with a brainstorm.

"Hey, Dad! I have a great idea! What about porta-walls?"

"Porta-what?"

"You know, those white rubber strips that look like white sidewalls. The hubcaps hold 'em in place. I'll keep 'em clean, I promise."

"Forget it. They'll make the hubcaps fall off while I'm driving."

It was hopeless.

This standoff held for nearly five years, until I got my learner's permit and, a month later, my license. But before I could actually take the car on the road, there was another condition: Dad would have to steer the huge Olds in and out of our undersized garage. There was about a fourteen-inch tolerance on each side of the swinging doors, so license or no license, I wasn't yet qualified for that maneuver.

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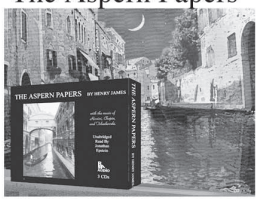

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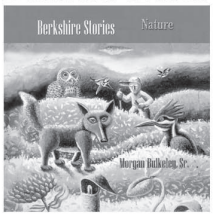

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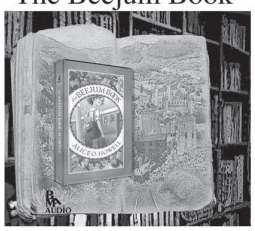

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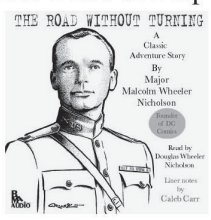

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Eventually he relented, coaching me on how to ease the monster out of its lair. But each time I backed it out, ever so slowly, he would lose his battle for self-control.

"*Hold 'er!*" he'd shout, wiping his brow before allowing me to move it another inch. Then I had to pull it back inside and start all over again. We went through weeks of this mutual torture until, at long last, the momentous day arrived when I was to go solo.

It was Easter Sunday, a perfect, crisp April morning. In deference to the Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church across the street, our grocery store was closed, but Dad discreetly opened the door for Joe Hartman, a favored customer in need of some last minute items for his family's holiday dinner. Meanwhile, we were planning to visit our Pittsburgh cousins for the day, so while Dad was busy with Joe, I got to pull the car out of the garage.

It began uneventfully. I backed out without a problem, swung into the wide street, and began to roll towards the curb where I would park behind Joe's baby blue Ford. No sweat, I told myself. Tons of room.

And then it happened:

Cindy Siorsky, the town tart, was strutting up State Street on her way to church, and Cindy really knew how to shake her stuff. Every spike heel stride and hip gyration set off a maddening ripple of jiggling curves, while her shoulder length flaxen hair bounced in perfect rhythm with every step.

The dress was see-through yellow, sleeveless, flouncing above the knee, and set off by a tightly cinched belt which accentuated her narrow waist and spreading hips. And all of this was backlit by the April sun, highlighting her hair and revealing the breathtaking outline of her voluptuous bombshell body.

My head jerked as if on a leash. "*YEEOWW!*" I bellowed. "LOOK AT *THAT*!"

For a brief moment I actually thought the sound of shattering glass was due to my high decibel voice cracking the windshield. But in fact I had managed to smash the Oldsmobile's right headlight into the Ford's left taillight.

They appeared at the door instantly, taking in the scene of sparkling white and red shards of glass all over the street.

Joe was speechless. My father wasn't.

"What the hell!" he said. "Look at all that room! How could this happen?"

A torrent of explanations raced through my frenzied mind. Maybe a clever answer, delivered in just the right manner, would get me off the hook. Surely I could come up with something meaningful. Finally I delivered my quick-witted rejoinder:

"*I don' know*."

For the longest time, Dad and Joe just stood there, examining the damage and shaking their heads. Lucky for me, Cindy wasn't in their line of sight so they couldn't deduce how it happened. And I wasn't about to come forth with any more information. Paralyzed by the situation, I continued to sit in the car until Dad barked at me to find a broom and sweep up the mess before someone got a flat tire.

There were consequences, of course. I had to put in a couple of weeks' work to pay for the damage, and I wasn't permitted to go anywhere near the car until the debt was satisfied. I never fessed up, though, not even as an adult. Too embarrassing.

There is a silver lining to this story. Many years later, my teenage son introduced the family car to a fire hydrant while chatting up his girlfriend. The damage was negligible, both to the car and the hydrant, but he was sweating bullets while explaining how it happened, basically trying to convince me that the fire hydrant had magically jumped two feet from the curb while he was deftly maneuvering the car into an impossibly tight space. Meanwhile I was having trouble keeping a straight face because the image of Cindy Siorsky kept coming to mind. I surprised him by laughing out loud and giving him a reassuring hug. Then I sat him down, told him the Cindy story, and asked him to remember this moment when his own kid pulled a similar bonehead move thirty years hence.

It's been half a century, but the memory returns every Easter. I can still picture that brilliant April morning; that sunlit blond hair, that revealing yellow dress; that shattering glass …

— David Shifrin

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Calendar

Every Monday (exc. holidays): Select Board meeting, 4 p.m., Town Hall.

Thursday, April 2: Special Town Meeting on zoning bylaw changes, 7 p.m., Monterey Firehouse. See p. 3.

Thursday, April 9: Passover.

Free Blood Pressure Clinic, Town Hall Meeting Room, 2–3 p.m.

Sunday, April 12: Easter.

Wednesday, April 15: Community Potluck Dinner, 6 p.m. Meetinghouse Basement. Program will be on Feng Shui. See p. 9.

Friday, April 17: Otis Spring Fling, 6–9:30 p.m., Farmington River School, Rte. 8 N., Otis. Music, Potluck, Kids' Photo Contest, Family Event. Free.

Saturday, April 18:

Herbal First Aid Workshop with Jane Kasten, 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Monterey Meetinghouse. See p. 9.

Free film, *Mountaintop Removal*, 7 p.m., Monterey Meetinghouse basement. See p. 11.

Family Cabaret, 7 p.m., Sandisfield Arts Center, Hammertown Road at Rte. 57, Sandisfield. Music, comedy, something for everyone. Adults $10, children $5. See p. 13.

Waste paint and oil collection, 9–11:30 a.m., Great Barrington Recycling Center, Stockbridge Road.

Lecture on College Mental Health Crisis, 9 a.m., Red Lion Inn, Stockbridge. $25.

Monday, April 20: Patriots' Day. Town Offices, Library closed.

Tuesday, April 21: CHP Free Health Screening, Community Health Program, 10 a.m.–noon, Town Hall.

Friday, April 24: Informational meeting to discuss budget and other issues on May 2nd Town Meeting warrant, 7 p.m., Firehouse.

Saturday, April 25:

Nature Walk at Bob's Way led by Bonner McAllester, 10 a.m.–noon. Meet at trailhead, Rte.23 near Mt. Hunger Road. See p. 9.

Square and contra dancing, 8:30–11:30 p.m., Dewey Hall, Rt. 7, Sheffield. Music by Mountain Laurel. Caller David Kaynor. All dances are taught; beginners and children are welcome. Adults $8–10, children $5. Information 528-9385.

Saturday, May 2:

Annual Town Meeting and Town Election, 9 a.m.–, Monterey Firehouse

CHP Children's Attic children's and maternity consignment sale, 9 a.m.–4 p.m., Housatonic Community Center, Main Street, Housatonic; also Sunday, May 3, 9 a.m.–noon. Information 413-528-9311 ext 2130.

Scutellaro/Caldwell Wedding

On February 21, 2009, Dinah Scutellaro and Bill Caldwell were married in Live Oak, Florida. In attendance were fifty friends and family from around the country, some coming as far away as Seattle Washington. The newlyweds are now residing in Wilton Manors, Florida. The Scutellaros lived for many years on Mount Hunger Road in Monterey before moving to Florida.

ॐ

The Observer
February 26–March 25

High temp. (3/19)	58°
Low temp. (3/4,5)	2°
Avg. high temp.	40.2°
Avg. low temp.	19.1°
Avg. temp.	29.7°
Total precipitation (rain and melted snow)	2.32 in.
Snowfall	9.1 in.

Precipitation occurred on 12 days.

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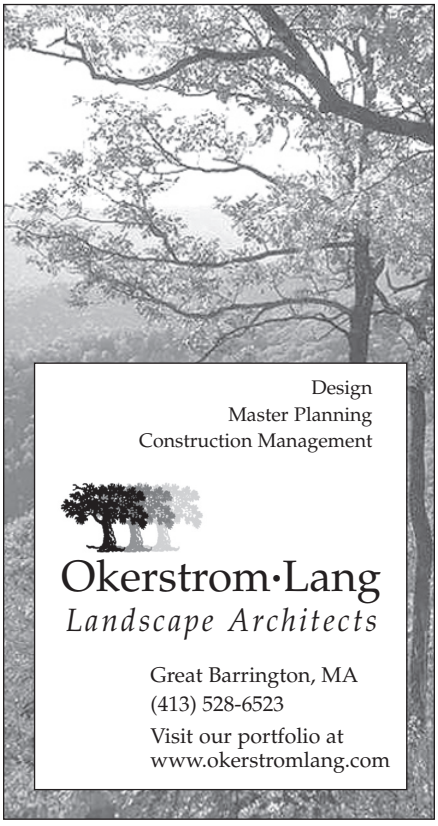

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Contributions from local artists this month:
George Emmons, p. 16; Bonner McAllester, p. 14.

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